

breathe by 221BFakerStreet

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Summary:

"The water is so cold that she can't tell where her skin ends and it begins. Stephanie Harrington holds her breath and remembers when this numbness was *pleasant*."

There's a new Queen in town, and she's got her eye on the pretty princess with a chip on her shoulder the size of Hawkins, Indiana.

1. the unimpressed gaze of La Celestine

Author's Note:

It's a genderswapped au, hooray!
I noticed a suspicious lack of fem!Billy and fem! Steve, so I endeavored to remedy that. Special thanks to hoppnhorn and everybody on tumblr for being hella supportive and super cool. Thanks for reading my brain vomit, I appreciate you all. ♥

Stephanie is holding her breath. Nobody calls her that anymore- Steph, Stephanie, Stephie. Nobody calls her much of anything these days.

The water is so cold that she can't tell where her skin ends and it begins. Stephanie Harrington holds her breath and remembers when this numbness was *pleasant*.

She breaks the surface with a violent gasp, trying desperately not to choke on chlorinated pool water. From below, the sky had looked like a Picasso watercolor; the unimpressed gaze of La Celestine bearing down on her with one blind eye.

Now it only looks like a sky. Same stars, same unfathomable blackness surrounding them. Stevie doesn't know much about that sky, but neither does Stephanie. Like they are two separate people, because *who knows?* They *might* be.

She gets out of the pool, shivering, and makes her way inside. She drips pool water on the carpet, and doesn't quite smile. A year ago, maybe, that would've made her laugh- getting pool water on her mother's expensive Persian rug. Now it just makes her step to the side, onto the hardwood. She shivers all the way upstairs to her bedroom because she forgot to bring a towel, but, hey, at least cold is *some* sort of feeling. She strips out of her underwear and falls, naked, into the nest of blankets and pillows that comprises her bed.

She forgets to turn the light off, but she falls asleep anyway. In the morning, she will forget to turn the light off again.

Billie is being a huge bitch today, but this is normal, so Stevie tries to ignore it. It isn't easy. Nothing ever gets to be *easy*. Her dad told her, once: "Sweetie, anything worth having is difficult to earn".

She had thought of her mother, then, and how she filled her days with household crafting projects and social lunches. Wondered what difficult things she'd had to do, what she'd had to give up to earn her peace of mind. *Maybe*, she thinks, *this is the difficult thing*.

Billie slams her hand down on the locker next to Stevie's face, rattling the metal and making her jump. Swears she almost swallowed her tongue.

"Hey, slut!" Billie's voice is pleasantly raspy, grates against her in an awkward way. Stevie rolls her eyes so hard she honestly might've strained something.

"*Really?* 'Cause last week you were calling me the Virgin Queen." Billie is grinning, all teeth, when Stevie closes her locker and turns to face her. She's cute, Billie, disarmingly so. She's strong, biceps flexing as she leans further into Stevie's space using the locker as leverage. Her lips are very, *very* pink, and Stevie dies inside a little bit at how that thought makes her sweat.

"So?"

"So... I can't be both, Hargrove." The looming threat of another eye roll strain is definitely the thing that makes her turn away, and not at all the boiling pit of *whatever* inside of her that makes her think about things she shouldn't.

"Awwww, I'm *flattered*, honey! I didn't know you were paying such close attention." Billie has caught up to her, boots thudding against the linoleum. Walks just behind and to her left, and Stevie *hates* it because she's *always* on edge now, and she can feel the buzzing panic rising in her chest like an alien will burst out of it any second now, and then Billie will have to save them all from the ensuing invasion and everyone will be *screwed*. But *she'd* be dead, at least- only that thought isn't as calming as it used to be.

“Yeah,” she throws back in the most deadpan tone she can manage, “I keep a pink glittery notebook of all your shitty insults right next to my bed. Dear Diary, today Billie called me a slut and I fucking *swooned*.”

The laugh surprises her, not because it's loud (even though it *is*), but because it's... genuine. Or, at least, it's not *mean*. And that's just... that's new.

Suddenly, there is an arm around her shoulder, and she can feel Billie's heat seeping into her and her chest carelessly bumping against her arm as they walk. “You wanna cut class, Princess?”

And, *fuck* it, she really kind of *does*.

2. Like a live wire

The Camaro smells like smoke and leather, and Stevie rolls down the window just a smidge, leans her head against it and wishes she could sleep. Back in Black is playing on the car stereo, punching a drum beat straight into her bones. She feels strung tight, like a tightrope. Like a live wire.

“What's wrong, girlie?” The music softens to a low indiscernible thrum at Billie's touch. “Daddy take away your Beamer?”

Stevie raises a middle finger and sighs. They pass the edge of town and she realizes they're heading toward the quarry. Near the woods-surrounded, really. She grips the hem of her skirt in a white knuckled fist. They come to a bit of a rough stop, and that's hardly a surprise with Billie behind the wheel.

A tanned hand reaches over and clicks open the passenger side door, and for a minute Stevie thinks she's been tricked. Billie's gonna leave her here and go yuck it up with Carol and Tommy afterward.

Only, when she goes to look- whether it's to cuss her out or beg her not to leave, she's not *entirely* sure- Billie is already out of the car. She breathes, for what feels like the first time in... she really can't remember when. That's concerning.

“C'mon, get your perky little ass out here!” Stevie rolls her eyes- a theme with the two of them, it seems- but she does as she's told, walks around to lean against the hood of the Camaro where Billie is fiddling with something small in her hands. Something in Stevie loosens when she sees it, unravels just a bit. Billie puts the joint to her lips and lights it, pulls. She doesn't pass it over, and Stevie still isn't sure what the fuck she's actually *doing* here. Everything about Billie should be soft, but it's not; not where it matters. Stevie is soft, like the underbelly of a snail. Like a fucking *marshmallow*.

Billie grabs her jaw suddenly, squeezes until her mouth opens, and then she leans in until their lips are practically touching, and *blows*.

Stevie isn't prepared, so she coughs a little before she gets the idea.

Billie laughs. Of *course* she laughs. The next time Billie shares a hit, she practically seals her mouth over the blonde's and sucks the smoke from her lungs. Those pretty pink lips part for her, and the kiss is messy and wet and warm. Stevie's skin buzzes and someone *moans* and it's all too much, too *real* until she pushes away and exhales smoke like the raging fire in her belly has finally gone out for good.

"Damn, girlie." Billie grins like a shark scenting blood in the water. Cages Stevie against the Camaro until she can feel the heat radiating off the younger girl's body. Those teeth. Those *teeth*.

There's a hand slipping up her skirt, fingers tickling at her thighs. Then suddenly her panties have been pulled aside and Billie is slipping a finger in, so easy with how *wet* she suddenly is and-

Stevie, Steph, Stephanie- whoever she is now, whoever she *has* been- is panting, nerves lighting up like strands of blinking Christmas bulbs on overdrive. Overloaded. Billie is pressing *in*, her lips sucking at the juncture of her neck and shoulder, biting, *marking*.

"Fuck! Billie..." Stevie grabs her shoulders just for something to hold onto. Feels like the earth is falling out from under her feet.

She's tumbling downhill fast, Billie's thumb pressing down just *so* and then she's crying- real, *actual* tears- and it's so strange to feel something like *joy*.

"C'mon, sweetheart," Billie whispers, one arm wrapped around her back so she won't fall, "come for me."

Stevie gasps, snaps like a rubber band, muscles spasming in blissful echoes of white-hot pleasure. The air is thin, she's floating, she's *gone*.

When she comes back to her body, Billie is licking her fingers clean, and she feels her knees start to quake. Billie helps her back into the seat. She doesn't remember much of the drive to her house, but when she closes her eyes in the darkness of her bedroom she can still see that predator smile, looming as she falls deeper and deeper into sleep.

3. like a train through a dark tunnel at night

“Hey, *you’re* a girl!”

Stevie looks down at herself, looks back at Dustin and raises her eyebrows. “Uhhhh, yeah? Last time I checked.”

Dustin, who apparently lacks the ability to self-assess in real-time, forges ahead undeterred. “So, like... what do girls *like*?”

“Um.” This is not what Stephanie's life was supposed to be like. She was supposed to be the party queen of Hawkins High, run wild and then run off to college or become a model or something. She wasn't supposed to fight monsters with a baseball bat full of nails. Wasn't supposed to be friends with a pack of 13-year-old nerds who asked her for dating advice. Was supposed to *be* the one to break hearts, not walk around with one *herself*.

“Depends on the girl,” she shrugs, and helps herself to a slice of pepperoni. They’re waiting on the aforementioned nerdlings to arrive, so they can all go next door, to the Palace. Dustin is playing with his crust, looking like he's about to ask another question when Stevie hears the telltale rumble of the Camaro's engine. Hears it shut off. Dustin looks like he's just been offered a tour of the space station, and it *clicks*, and she recognizes immediately that they’re both *fucked*. Maybe her more than *him*, but still.

“Hey,” she says as Dustin peels himself from the sticky pleather seats of their booth. He turns to look at her, and she smiles at him. He's got a mouth like a sailor, but he's *such* a sweet kid, and she can *see* the heartbreak coming from a long way off, like a train through a dark tunnel at night. “Don't try too hard to impress her, okay? Just... just be yourself.” It sounds like shitty advice even to *her*, but Dustin smiles back at her, gives a small “thanks, Stevie” and runs off to greet his doomed love interest and their friends who are just now arriving.

“Well, look who we have here!” Billie's voice makes the hairs on the back of her neck stand up, and it sweeps down her arms until she has to suppress a shiver. She sits heavily in Dustin's vacated seat, leans close on her elbows over the chipped Formica and remnants of cold

pizza. "How's my pretty princess doing, hm?"

Stevie gulps, licks the grease from her lips, and watches Billie's eyes track her movements. *Oh*, she thinks, and doesn't know why it didn't occur to her *before*. Especially after the best orgasm of her life at the edge of the quarry, and how Billie- rough and tumble, take no prisoners *Billie-fucking-Hargrove*- how gently she had handled her, brought her off, then brought her home. "Oh," she breathes, and licks her lips again. "I'm, uh... could be better."

She doesn't want to lie, because she feels like Billie would *know* somehow, like she sees something inside her that she didn't know was there; a phantom knife sticking out of her heart, still bleeding. Billie's lips are rosy, and her smile falters a little. Stevie tries not to pick at the skin of her fingers, a nervous habit she's developed ever since... *well*. When she doesn't have a bat to swing, or a fire to light, or something- *anything*- to do except *be*. Billie's hand comes down on both of hers, calloused and overly warm in the hot interior of the pizzeria.

"Shitheads will be a while. Let's go for a drive."

Stevie can't suppress the shiver this time, lets it run down her spine, down low into her belly where it sits like a smoldering coal.

They end up in the dingy bathroom instead, Billie's jeans around her ankles as she leans back against the locked door. Stevie sinks to her knees, pressing wet kisses along the taught lines of Billie's stomach, licking the salt from her skin. She presses her teeth into Billie's hip until it leaves a mark, and Billie shoves her fist against her mouth to stifle her moan. They're both panting by the time Stevie reaches her goal. She's puffing warm air against the sensitive skin of her labia, and *god* she can *smell* her, dripping and ready to devour.

A whine sounds at the back of Billie's throat, and Stevie looks up at her as she leans in to taste. Those blue eyes are staring at her, heavy lidded but bright with something like *wonder* and Stevie wants, more than anything, for Billie to *always* look at her that way. She grabs Billie's bucking hips to steady them, pulls her closer and thrusts her tongue inside.

"*Fuck*, baby..." There is *grit* in her voice, and Stevie's groin *throbs*. She squeezes her thighs together, grips bruises into Billie's hips, and sucks and licks like she's receiving communion with every breathy swallow.

Billie's fingers tug at her hair, pulling her this way and that, finding the right angle until she's *quivering* and her knuckles are bitten red like her lips after brutal kisses. Suddenly her knees are buckling, and Stevie ends up with a lapful of trembling Billie. Billie, who fists Stevie's sweater and pulls her into a sweet, slow kiss; who laughs when there's a violent knock on the door until Stevie's laughing, too. They clean up, and when Stevie leaves the grody bathroom, she doesn't feel embarrassed- doesn't even *notice* the stink-eye they're getting from the manager- because Billie's wolfish grin is there like a lighthouse, like true north. Leads her all the way out to her Beamer *because*, Billie tells her as she presses her against the side of the trunk, so she can click the door open, *it's got a bigger back seat*.